

Social Web Tips for Teens from ConnectSafely.org

Be your own person. Don't let friends or strangers pressure you to be someone you aren't. And know your limits. You may be Net-savvy, but people and relationships change, and unexpected stuff can happen on the Internet.

Be nice online. Or at least treat people the way you'd want to be treated. People who are nasty and aggressive online are at greater risk of being bullied or harassed themselves. If someone's mean to you, try to ignore them - often that makes them stop. Use privacy tools to block them from viewing your full profile and contacting you.

Think about what you post. Stuff you post online can be used against you, even in private emails, so be careful about what you post. Don't post anything you consider friends can use this info against you, especially if they become ex-friends.

Passwords are private. Protect your identity and reputation online. Don't share your password even with friends. It's hard to imagine, but friendships change and you don't want to be impersonated by anyone. Pick a password you can remember but no one else can guess. One trick: Create a sentence like "I graduated from King School in 05," for this password: "lgfKSI05."

Read between the "lines." It may be fun to check out new people for friendship or romance, but be aware that, while some people are nice, others aren't because they're trying to get something. Flattering or supportive messages may be more about manipulation than friendship or romance.

Don't talk about sex with strangers. Be cautious when communicating with people you don't know in person, especially with strangers. Conversations about sex online or physical details. Don't lead them on - you don't want to be the target of a predator's grooming. If they persist, call your local police or contact CyberTipline.com.

Avoid in-person meetings. The one way someone can physically harm you is if you're both in the same location, so - to be 100% safe - don't meet them in person. If you really have to get together with someone you "met" online, don't go alone. Have the meeting in a public place, tell a parent or some other solid backup, and bring some friends along.

Be smart when using a cell phone. All the same tips apply with phones as with computers. Except phones are with you wherever you are, often away from home and your usual support systems. Be careful who you give your number to and how you use GPS and other technologies that can pinpoint your physical location.

